

Ali's story: Poor quality housing

Ali is 33 years old, a single mum with three children. She was living in the private rented sector and was unable to work because of mental health problems at the time she answered the survey:

"I had to leave work as my childcare [costs] for three children were not being covered by my full-time job. I applied for housing benefit [while working] and it didn't cover my full rent but it did cover three-quarters of it. After re-applying after leaving work I got [hit by] the benefit cap. I was [told I was entitled to] 43 pounds a week for a 650 pound a month rent. I spoke to housing at the council numerous times and they said my benefits were correct and 43 pounds a week wasn't an error.

Administrative problems with housing benefit

"I then had an appointment with [a debt advisor] where she told me that I wasn't getting enough for housing benefit. I have [now] been backdated and it should have been 93 [pounds] a week. But in my experience with the council, I wouldn't have got this money back if it hadn't been for the [debt advice]. I am a single mum with three children and I am really grateful for the help I receive. [But housing benefit applications are] too long-winded and there are too many factors and I find it so confusing as well as the breakdowns [of what you are entitled to] in the letters you get sent.

Access to social housing

"I have been waiting nearly two months [now] for the landlady to put in a court order for my eviction, so I can be accepted for social housing [as I have been assessed as] in 'need' to be able to move to affordable [social] accommodation. [Things would have been improved for me if there was] a faster process at getting moved into more affordable housing or the rent was cheaper."

Poor quality

"[My home] has electric heaters and is constantly cold. Glass door to the kitchen, my children run at constantly.

Electricity kept tripping out because of dodgy electrics. I have reported this, but nothing came of it. [There is] mould around the windows and doors."

Wider impacts

"I was constantly trying to get money from anywhere to pay my rent. I was using credit cards and it has caused me poor mental health. [As a result] my negative outlook has meant that I have isolated myself and I am just so unhappy that I don't know where me and my children will move to and no one comes round anymore."

